

The following is a really interesting exchange between two people of the Church of England.

One is Canon Stowell (right), who is writing from Australia about the situation in New Zealand in the mid 1800's when there were tribes rebelling against the British government.



He had never been to New Zealand.

He wrote a letter criticising the immigrants to New Zealand, and the British government, siding with Maori. His letter was published in a newspaper. This is what he said:

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*“But who brought on the trouble that has recently overtaken New Zealand? The grasping and unfair, and oppressive emigrants. How did they treat the poor natives? The way the hunters of India treat the wild boars, cut them up. Alas! alas! that British civilization should far forget itself. New Zealand is not a conquered country, and we cannot tread it down with the heel of oppression. Christianity brought New Zealand under the scepter of Britain’s shield, and it must have fair play. The emigrants, the vagabonds of our country, must not be allowed to hew down the poor aborigines, and oppress them as they have done, taking their land to a large extent from them; and then when the poor natives turn round to defend themselves, they are called rebels and savages. Do not form hasty opinions about poor aborigines.”*

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A missionary, Reverend Ironside, who had been working in New Zealand for many years, read the paper, and the letter, and was horrified. This is what he replied

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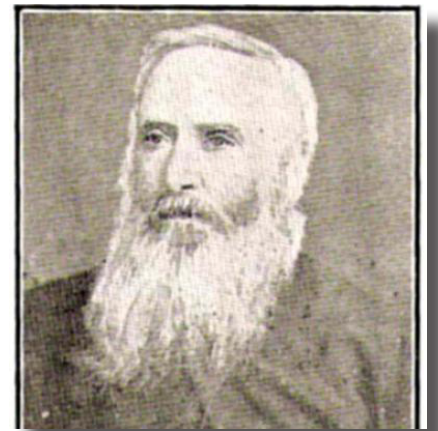
To the Rev. Canon Stowell, D.D., Manchester, England.

Reverend Sir - A friend of mine has kindly sent me a copy of the Mona’s Herald for November 13, 1861, which contains a leading article, entitled “The Rev. Canon Stowell upon New Zealand.”

In that article is an extract (above) from a speech of yours at the Church Missionary Society’s meeting, held in Douglas in November last.

In reply I would say the following

I have lived twenty years in New Zealand in the capacity of a Wesleyan Methodist Missionary, am tolerably conversant with the language and habits of the natives, was in and out among the poor people during many of their wars, and yield to none in a sincere desire for their welfare. ...



During the whole of my twenty years’ experience in that country I cannot call to mind more than one instance of murder of natives by a white man.

Not an acre of land has ever been purchased from the natives except at their own repeated request, and by the free consent, as far as could be ascertained, of every individual owner.

They have now millions of acres of land unappropriated, not one tithe of which they can ever cultivate. This

land has been a fruitful source of quarrel, bloodshed and violence, among themselves; and the quietly-disposed among them, lamenting over evils which they cannot remedy, namely, the unceasing strife among the various tribes about ownership and boundaries, would gladly alienate (i.e. sell) the land to the Crown, being sure of equitable payment for all they sold, large reserves for themselves and families, and the presence of English emigrants, who would be a guarantee of peace and quietness, and also furnish an excellent market for all the produce they could raise.

If the Queen could purchase their lands it would be an inestimable blessing to themselves, by removing the fruitful source of war and strife.

But the violent and disorderly among them not only refuse to sell lands of which they are themselves owners, but resolutely prevent their neighbours from selling theirs.

The noted Weremu Kingi [sic], in open conference with the District Commissioner, is asked by him if the land in dispute belongs to the parties offering it for sale.

He replies, "Yes, the land is theirs; but I will not let them sell it."

In 1854 these violent men cruelly and in cold blood murdered seven of their fellow natives, who, unarmed, were engaged in cutting the boundaries of a piece of land which they wished Government to buy. If the Governor had had it in his power to punish those murderers as they deserved, I believe the present war would have been prevented. But they escaped through the weakness of Government, and ever since the lawless and turbulent have done things of this kind with impunity.

It is really too bad to charge the unoffending settlers with being "grasping, and unfair, and oppressive."

They are in no way responsible for the war, which is an Imperial question, but have many of them, suffered the loss of all. Husbands, and sons, and fathers, and even little children, have been cruelly murdered.

The houses of the settlers are burnt; their pretty English homesteads, in which they had invested their all, and on which they had expended years to toil and sacrifice, are utterly laid waste by an unprincipled mob of natives.

The emigrants of New Zealand are, as a body, wholly innocent of your censures.

They are, and have been, honourable in their dealings with the natives.

In fact, at Taranaki and its neighbourhood they dare not be otherwise, for they have been at the mercy of the natives.

Government for years past has been powerless to repress and punish native crime. Trespasses by the native cattle and horses\* upon the cultivations of settlers have been of necessity overlooked, while the settler's horse or cow wandering upon the unfenced land of the natives, has been in many instances shot down or barbarously hacked with the tomahawk.

I speak of these things coming under my own observation, as a missionary.

I lived from 1855 to 1858 in Taranaki, where the late unhappy war raged; and was an eye-witness of the patience with which the settlers there bore repeated instances of outrage, and insult, and wrong at the hands of the natives. I hope I shall not be chargeable with want of sympathy with the natives of New Zealand in thus writing.

I have given evidence of my sincere desire to their welfare during many years of toil and sacrifice among them; and were I younger in years, and able to endure the toil and exposure, I would gladly go back and labour and die among them.

But I cannot justify the rebellions in their present course, and I cannot allow the emigrants to New Zealand to be charged with fault of which they are wholly innocent, without replying to those charges.”

I am, reverend sir, yours very faithfully,

SAMUEL IRONSIDE.

Newtown, Sydney, January 18 1862.

Sydney Morning Herald, February 12 1862  
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